

**NORTH CAROLINA TRAILS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

April 8, 2011
Jordan Lake State Recreation Area
Apex, North Carolina

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Barbara Oslund, Chair – Representing Equestrian Interests
Mr. Paul Elliot – Representing Mountain Bicycling Interests
Mr. Joe Jacob – Paddle Trail Interests
Mr. David Lee – Representing Local Governments
Mr. Leslie Love – Representing Hiking Interests
Mr. Brain Sears – Off Highway Vehicle Interests
Mr. Terry Smith – Representing Hiking Interests

DENR, DPR: Mr. Lewis Ledford, Director
Ms. Carol Tingley, Deputy Director
Mr. Brian Strong, Chief of Planning and Natural Resources
Mr. Darrell McBane, State Trails Program Manager
Ms. Amy Cooper, Eastern Region Trails Specialist
Mr. Tim Johnson, Mountain Region Trails Specialist
Mr. Vincent T. Newman-Brooks, Grants Manager

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Barbara Oslund, Chair Person called the meeting of the North Carolina Trails Committee (NCTC) to order at 9:30 a.m. Barbara then invited Lewis Ledford to share information about the Division of Parks and Recreation and the current session of the North Carolina General Assembly.

II. Director Ledford's Division of Parks and Recreation Overview

Director Ledford provided NCTC members with an overview of the Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR), its enabling legislation, mission and goals that includes the conservation and stewardship of existing park lands and facilities; providing environmental education programs; and providing reasonable and sustainable recreation opportunities.

Director Ledford noted that DPR is responsible for 35 state parks, 4 state recreation areas, 7 state lakes, 20 state natural areas, 4 state rivers, and 4 state trails.

He then talked about the importance of the State Trails Program to the Division of Parks and Recreation noting that State Trails are a unit of the State Parks System, that most visitors to State Parks want and use trails, and that the promotion of State Trails (Mountains-to-Sea Trail and the Deep River Trail) fosters partnerships, builds advocacy, and enhances the public value of every trail project.

Director Ledford updated the NCTC members about bills being considered by the North Carolina General Assembly that could have an effect on DPR. He shared information about Senate Bill 462 and House Bill 574 that if approved, would divert 50% of funding from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) for other purposes. He then provided the NCTC members with a handout of information about the history of PARTF and how PARTF monies are distributed.

Director Ledford thanked members of the NCTC for their efforts to help guide DPR and the State Trails Program through the review and recommending federal Recreational Trails Program and state Adopt-A-Trail grants, and for their willingness to undertake a review and update of the state's "Trail Guidelines."

III. Approval of Minutes from the October 22, 2010 NCTC Meeting

Motion - A motion was made by Paul Elliot to accept the October 22, 2010 minutes as presented. David Lee seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

IV. Business

Review of 2011 Federal Recreational Trails Program Grant Applications

Darrell McBane began discussions of North Carolina's 2011 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants by reviewing the amount of funding available for consideration:

Priority 1 Funding – Funding Presently Allocated and in NC DOT's Account

\$ 777,938	Current 2011 Allocation
\$ - 54,456	7% Administrative Allocation
\$- 38,397	5% Education/Training allocation
\$ 684,585	Total Available for All Grants
\$ 205,375	30% Available for OHV Trail Projects
\$ 479,209	70% Available for Non-Motorized Trail Project

Priority 2 Funding – Funding Anticipated Based on 2010 RTP Funding Allocation

\$ 922,062	Current 2011 Allocation
\$ - 64,544	7% Administrative Allocation
\$- 46103	5% Education/Training allocation
\$ 811,415	Total Available for All Grants
\$ 243,425	30% Available for OHV Trail Projects
\$ 567,991	70% Available for Non-Motorized Trail Project

Darrell McBane then asked the committee members to consider the 48 applications received for the 2011 RTP funding totaling over \$3 million in requests.

After great discussion, the committee recommended the following projects:

Priority 1 funding: 5 motorized trail projects at \$375,000; and 7 non-motorized trail projects at \$513,500.

Priority 2 funding: 9 additional non-motorized trail projects at \$494,296.

Motion – Brian Sears made a motion to forward to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources a list of 21 applications for funding through the 2011 Recreational Trails Program. Paul Elliot seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. A list of the 2011 RTP grant-funding recommendations is attached.

Review of Applications Received for the 2010-2011 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program

Darrell McBane then asked the committee members to consider the 21 applications received for the 2011-2012 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program (AAT). Darrell stated that the requests totaled over \$92,478 for the \$108,000 available through this program. After much discussion, the committee recommended funding 14 applications for a total of \$58,018.

Motion – Brian Sears made a motion to forward to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources a list of 14 applicants for the 2011-2012 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program funding. Les Love seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. A list of the 2011-2012 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program funding recommendations is attached.

The NCTC then decided to announce a second call for 2011-2012 AAT grant applications and to highlight projects and items that are eligible for funding and that current AAT applicants should be informed about this second call for applications.

Motion: Terry Smith made a motion that the State Trails Program should advertise and accept State Adopt-A-Trail Grant Applications. This motion was seconded by Joe Jacob, after which the vote was unanimous.

Division of Parks and Recreation's Bicycle and Equestrian Trail Task Force Update

Brian Strong, Chief of the Natural Resources and Planning for the Division of Parks and Recreation shared information about the division's Bicycle and Equestrian Trail Task Force and their efforts to:

1. to develop a comprehensive and uniform evaluation of the NC state parks system to identify additional opportunities where these user groups could be accommodated
2. to develop a process to evaluate appropriate sites for single track bicycle and equestrian trail use in units of the state parks systems.

Brian talked about DPR's mission – to conserve and protect representative examples of the natural beauty, ecological features and recreational resources of statewide significance; and to provide outdoor recreational opportunities in a safe and healthy environment. Brian also talked about the task force's objective; to develop a systematic and objective process to balance the desires of recreational users and other visitors while meeting the requirements of preserving park resources for posterity.

Brian then talked about the methodology developed to address the objectives of the task force that include the following phases:

1. Phase I
Identify prospective sites
2. Phase II
Rank prospective sites based on size of unconstrained land)
3. Phase III
Review Each site (23 units)
 - Natural Resources
 - Planning
 - Maintenance
 - Operations
4. Phase IV
The Task Force is currently performing onsite evaluations of a number of units.
5. Phase V
The final step will be submission of recommendations of the committee to the Director.

Brian concluded his remarks by requesting that the NCTC review and comment on the task force findings when it is ready for public review. Brian then asked if there were questions.

Paul Elliot asked “how can we help and are you ready for user input?” Brain responded that they are not yet ready for user input, that staff are currently working with park superintendents in listed parks and conducting field investigations to better evaluate the potential for bike or equestrian trails. When this process is complete and Director Ledford has reviewed this list, your assistance will be requested.

Barbara Oslund asked if demographics or any need determination methods were incorporated into the decision making methodology. Brian stated that these factors were considered abut that no scientific data or survey data was used.

Barbara Oslund and Paul Elliot asked to be involved in the review process between the director of the Division of Parks and Recreation signs off on the final version of the “Bicycle and Equestrian Trail Task Force Report.”

Brian Sears asked why were off-highway vehicles excluded from this study, OHV use continues to grow as does the state’s population and folks need a legal, legitimate and managed place to ride. Brian stated that the operation of a licensed or unlicensed vehicle on park trails is not allowed unless such trail is designated as open to OHV use by DPR.

Brian Strong thanked the NCTC members for the opportunity to share this update noted that the NCTC would be asked to review and comment on any task force findings before the findings are made public.

V. Other Business

Completed Regional Trail Planning Projects

Darrell McBane and Tim Johnson, Western Region Trails Specialist provided paper copies of two (2) recently completed Regional Trail Plans:

1. Isothermal Regional Trails Plan that includes the counties of Cleveland, Rutherford, McDowell and Polk – a project completed by the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission. Funding for this project through an RTP grant from the State Trails Program
2. Western Piedmont Regional Trails Plan and Inventory that includes the counties of Caldwell, Alexander, Burke and Catawba – a project completed by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments through an RTP grant from the State Trails Program
3. The Piedmont Triad Regional Trails Plan and Inventory that includes the counties of Stokes, Rockingham, Caswell, Yadkin, Forsyth, Guilford, Alamance, Davie, Davidson, Randolph, and Montgomery – a project completed by the Piedmont

Triad Council of Governments through a RTP grant from the State Trails Program.

Darrell informed the NCTC members that the intent with these Regional Trail Plans is to develop a true State Trails Plan based on existing trail inventory data, official/approved

trail plans and desired trail plans. Darrell wants the NCTC's assistance to review this process and make sure we are getting the information we want and need.

Methodology for Reviewing North Carolina's Trail Guidelines

Barbara Oslund has requested the NCTC review the existing DPR's "Trail Guidelines," guidelines for the planning, construction and management of single use hiking trails, dual use hike/equestrian trails, and multi-use hike/mountain bicycle /equestrian trails. The existing guidelines do not include guidelines for single use mountain bicycle or hike/bike trails, and Barbara questions the 10 mile minimum trail mileage per park for equestrian and mountain bicycle trails.

Barbara asked staff of the State Trails Program to propose a methodology that the NCTC could use to begin this review process. Darrell McBane shared with the NCTC a draft methodology that includes the following:

1. Use the "Trail Standards Integration Model" (attached) to guide our review of the "Trail Guidelines" developed by a graduate student at North Carolina State University in the School of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management and used to draft the North Carolina Blueway Standards.
2. An important phase in the integration model is for the user groups to determine their needs/wants/desires/aggravations, data that can be used to develop a list of issues that need to be addressed.
3. NCTC members and staff can use conflict resolution, along with education and research to draft/revise the "Trail Guidelines."
4. Request public review, amend draft as necessary and implement new/revised guidelines/standards
5. Monitor and evaluate the outcome and amend standards according to facts, not personal opinions.

The NCTC members thought this methodology reasonable and Barbara Oslund, Equestrian Representative and Paul Elliot, Mountain Bicycle Representative agreed to work with staff to inform their user groups of this opportunity to create their list of issues noted in #2 above.

A follow-up meeting will be scheduled for the NCTC after this issue data is collected to begin discussions about what changes/modifications/additions are needed for the "Trails Guidelines."

VI. Date And Place for Next Meeting

NCTC members agreed to conduct a conference call meeting on June 24, 2011 beginning at 2:00 p.m. Agenda items will include a review of the second call for 2011-2012 Adopt-

A-Trail Grant Applications; and a review of draft 2012 RTP and 2012-2013 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Application packages and scoring system.

VII. **Adjourn Meeting**

Motion – Terry Smith made a motion to end the meeting at 3:48 p.m. Paul Elliot seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Barbara Oslund thanked all NCTC members and staff for an excellent meeting.